One of the first projects I worked on when I got to my site was teaching small children how to brush their teeth.

In my village, many children don’t have access to toothbrushes and toothpaste at home. This, in addition to the wide variety of sweets available in local shops, causes many young children to have dental problems from an early age. After recognizing this as a problem, the Community Health Worker and the teachers at the school were able to get toothbrush and toothpaste donations for each child in the school from different groups who came into our village. Using these donations, we started our work in the school.

The tooth brushing project was a collaborative effort between the Community Health Worker, the teachers at the school, and me as the Peace Corps Volunteer.

First, the Community Health Worker and I went into the school and did a lesson in the Infant I and II classes. We first used a model set of teeth and a large toothbrush to show the students the correct technique, and then we passed out one toothbrush to each student and had everyone practice outside. The teachers and I then labeled the brushes with each student’s name, and reinforced the lesson by having the Infant classes brush their teeth every day before the start of afternoon classes. After the Infant classes were in the habit of brushing their teeth every day, I worked with the rest of the teachers to review with the older students the importance of oral hygiene to enforce these same ideas to the older students.

 Megan brushing her teeth along with school children to show them the proper way of brushing teeth.

Now, all of the teachers at the school are on board with the project. Students are expected to arrive at school by 12:50 pm after lunch so they have time to brush their teeth before classes start at 1:00 pm. Each teacher is in charge of making sure all of their students participate in this school-wide effort.

My role as the PCV has been to check in with the teachers and encourage them to do this with their students every day, and to help encourage students to brush their teeth as they come into school after the lunch break. I am happy to say that almost all of the students now brush their teeth at least once per day at school – a behavior change that will positively affect the dental health of every student who is participating.

This project also incorporated capacity building as I worked with both my Community Health Worker to teach the Infant classes, and with the teachers at the school. Soon, I will begin to work with the teachers to brainstorm fundraising ideas within the school or community (perhaps aided by the GLOW Club or Student Leaders Club) so that we can get more toothpaste and make this project sustainable for the rest of the school year.

In the near future, we may also have students brush their teeth before morning classes as well.



School children brushing their teeth together after lunch.